

NCA  
VOC FOR IOP/FN  
POLITICAL FEATURE NO. 1-1507  
JOHN PAXSON/PONTIAC, ILLINOIS

SEPTEMBER 24, 1976

ELECTION 76: MIDWEST PROFILE  
(TAPE INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

//EDITORS' NOTE: THIS IS THE FIRST REPORT IN A SPECIAL SEVEN-PART SERIES WE PLAN ON THE COMING NATIONAL ELECTION. EACH WILL DISCUSS ISSUES, VOTING BLOCS AND REGIONS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SPECIFIC LOCALE. THEY WILL MOVE ON THE NCA WIRE, APPROXIMATELY ONE A WEEK, AND WILL BE FOR USE ANYTIME UNTIL THE ELECTION.///

ANNCR:

WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES DRAWING NEAR, VOA CORRESPONDENT JOHN PAXSON VISITED THE RURAL COMMUNITY OF PONTIAC, ILLINOIS FOR A LOOK AT POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND TRADITIONS IN THE MIDWEST.

VOICE:

PROBABLY NO OTHER AREA OF THE UNITED STATES IS MORE CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE REPUBLICAN PARTY THAN THE MIDWEST. THIS IS THE HOME OF CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANISM, THE HEARTLAND OF THE AMERICAN FARMBELT.

IT IS A VAST AREA OF THE COUNTRY, SPREADING FROM THE STATES OF INDIANA AND MICHIGAN IN THE EAST ALL THE WAY WESTWARD TO THE HIGH PLAINS STATES OF NEBRASKA AND KANSAS. ITS NORTHERN BORDER IS CANADA AND THE STATES OF MINNESOTA AND WISCONSIN. ON THE SOUTHERN EDGE ARE ILLINOIS AND MISSOURI.

FOR MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED YEARS THIS HAS BEEN REPUBLICAN COUNTRY. THE REPUBLICAN PARTY ITSELF WAS FOUNDED IN WISCONSIN. PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN WAS FROM ILLINOIS, HERBERT HOOVER CAME FROM A SMALL TOWN IN IOWA AND DWIGHT EISENHOWER MADE HIS HOME IN KANSAS. ALL WERE REPUBLICANS.

GENERALLY THE PARTY HAS FOUND ITS GREATEST SUPPORT IN THE RURAL AREAS OF THE MIDWEST. THE MORE METROPOLITAN AREAS TEND TO BE LARGELY DEMOCRATIC. ILLINOIS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE.

CHICAGO IS A DEMOCRATIC CITY COMPLETELY CONTROLLED BY ITS DEMOCRATIC MAYOR RICHARD DALEY. HE CAN GUARANTEE A DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE AS MANY AS ONE TO ONE AND HALF MILLION VOTES.

THE STATE'S RURAL AREAS, THOUGH, ARE REPUBLICAN. THEY ARE TOWNS LIKE PONTIAC, A SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY IN THE HEART OF THE MIDWEST CORN AND SOYBEAN BELT SOME ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY KILOMETERS SOUTHWEST OF CHICAGO. THE PEOPLE OF PONTIAC HARDLY KNOW WHAT A DEMOCRAT LOOKS LIKE. AND BETTY HARRIS, THE EDITOR OF THE PONTIAC NEWSPAPER, SAYS IT IS DIFFICULT TO REMEMBER THE LAST TIME A DEMOCRAT WAS ELECTED TO A COUNTY JOB.

TAPE CUT ONE -- HARRIS

"THIS IS PRIMARILY REPUBLICAN COUNTRY. BEEN THAT WAY FOR YEARS -- I SUPPOSE BACK TO DEPRESSION DAYS. AS FAR AS I KNOW THAT'S PROBABLY WHEN THE LAST DEMOCRAT OFFICERS WERE ELECTED, COUNTYWIDE. IN YEARS PAST THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION HAS GONE REPUBLICAN AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER. NOW, THE MARGIN OF VICTORY MAY NOT BE AS BIG AS IT WAS SAY IN THE EISENHOWER YEARS. BUT IT'S STILL REPUBLICAN."

VOICE:

IT IS SAID OF MIDWEST POLITICS THAT THEY DEPEND TO A LARGE DEGREE ON THE WEATHER. IF IT HAS BEEN GOOD AND THE CROPS ARE GOOD, AN INCUMBENT PRESIDENT WILL DO WELL IN THE MIDWEST. BUT IF THE WEATHER HAS BEEN POOR AND THE CROPS ARE BAD, THE PRESIDENT IS IN TROUBLE. JIM MACMAHON, WHO RUNS A LOCAL GRAIN STORAGE ELEVATOR IN PONTIAC, SAYS

SOME VOTING TRADITIONS ARE CHANGING, BUT STILL THE PRESIDENT'S SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE IS THE OBJECT OF THE FARMERS' SCORN WHEN TIMES ARE BAD.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- MACMAHON

"WHERE YOU USED TO VOTE THE STRAIGHT REPUBLICAN BALLOT THEY'RE SPLITTING UP AND THEY SEEM TO ALWAYS FIND FAULT WITH, LIKE, THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE. AND HE'S PROBABLY GOT ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT JOBS THERE IS BECAUSE HE'S GOT TO SECOND-GUESS THE CROP COMING ON AND REALLY TO ME IT'S A HOPELESS JOB. YOU CAN HIT ONE YEAR AND MAYBE NOT THE NEXT AND TRY TO MAKE A POLICY ON EXPORTS AND TO ME IT'S JUST A JOB YOU CAN'T...THERE ARE SOME YEARS YOU GET LUCKY AND HIT."

VOICE:

THIS YEAR, THOUGH, THE WEATHER ACROSS THE MIDWEST HAS BEEN GENERALLY GOOD. SOYBEANS, CORN AND WHEAT ARE IN EXCELLENT SHAPE AND FARMERS HAVE BEGUN HARVESTING A SECOND RECORD CROP IN AS MANY YEARS. THUS, PRESIDENT FORD SHOULD HOPE TO DO WELL IN THE RURAL AREAS. AGAIN, EDITOR BETTY HARRIS.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- HARRIS

"PART OF IT'S TRADITION, PART OF IT'S ECONOMIC. I THINK THESE ARE THE MAJOR THINGS. THEN YOU HAVE TIMES WHEN A PERSON CAPTURES THEIR IMAGINATION AS I THINK EISENHOWER DID WITH PEOPLE AROUND HERE. SOME OF THEM IN THE PAST WE HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN HAPPY ABOUT BUT I BELIEVE IN THE TWO PARTY SYSTEM. I THINK IT'S TRADITION, I THINK IT IS WITH A LOT OF VOTERS."

VOICE:

BUT TRADITION ALONE WILL NOT GUARANTEE A REPUBLICAN VICTORY IN THE MIDWEST. THE DEMOCRATS ARE TOO STRONG IN CITIES LIKE CHICAGO, DETROIT, ST. LOUIS AND KANSAS CITY. IN FACT, A REVIEW OF THE PAST FIVE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS SHOWS A SURPRISING BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES. THEY ARE ALMOST EQUALLY MATCHED THROUGH THE NINE CENTRAL STATES OF THE MIDWEST, WITH THE REPUBLICANS HOLDING A VERY SLIM LEAD.

IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES HAVE CAPTURED FIFTY-ONE PER CENT OF ALL THE VOTES CAST IN THE MIDWEST, THE DEMOCRATS FORTY-NINE PER CENT. THE REPUBLICANS FIND THEIR STRENGTH IN STATES LIKE NEBRASKA, KANSAS, IOWA AND INDIANA. THEY ARE WEAK IN MINNESOTA AND MICHIGAN.

MINNESOTA IS PROBABLY THE MOST DEMOCRATIC OF ANY OF THE MIDWESTERN STATES. IT HAS PRODUCED SUCH DEMOCRATIC POLITICIANS AS SENATORS HUBERT HUMPHREY, EUGENE MCCARTHY AND THE DEMOCRATS' CURRENT VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, WALTER MONDALE.

MICHIGAN TOO HAS FOR YEARS BEEN CONSIDERED A DEMOCRATIC STRONGHOLD WITH ITS LARGE POPULATION OF GENERALLY DEMOCRATIC UNION WORKERS AROUND DETROIT. BUT IN THE PRIMARY ELECTIONS FOUR YEARS AGO, CONSERVATIVES IN MICHIGAN SHOWED SURPRISING STRENGTH WHEN THEY GAVE CONSERVATIVE THIRD PARTY CANDIDATE GEORGE WALLACE ONE OF THE LARGEST MARGINS OF VICTORY HE HAD EVER KNOWN.

IT IS UNCERTAIN THIS YEAR JUST WHERE THAT SUPPORT WILL GO. PRESIDENT FORD, OF COURSE, IS FROM MICHIGAN AND THAT IN ITSELF SHOULD DRAW A GOOD NUMBER OF VOTES. BUT DEMOCRAT JIMMY CARTER HAS FOUND SUPPORT IN THE STATE TOO AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO DO WELL IN THE WORKING COMMUNITIES AROUND DETROIT.

THUS, BOTH CANDIDATES ARE CAMPAIGNING HARD, NOT ONLY IN MICHIGAN BUT THROUGHOUT THE MIDWEST. FOR THE PRIZE HERE IS RICH. ON THE AVERAGE, MORE THAN SEVENTEEN MILLION VOTERS IN THE NINE CENTRAL STATES GO TO THE POLLS

IN EACH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THAT IS ALMOST ONE  
FOURTH OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES CAST NATIONWIDE.

THE NINE STATES ALSO PROVIDE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN  
OF THE TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY ELECTORAL VOTES THAT ARE NEEDED  
TO PUT A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE INTO OFFICE. THAT'S MORE  
THAN TWENTY PER CENT OF THE NATIONAL TOTAL.

AND THE CANDIDATE WHO CAN FIND THE KEY TO UNLOCKING  
THE VOTES OF BOTH FARMER AND FACTORY WORKER IN THE AMERICAN  
MIDWEST IS WELL ON HIS WAY TO THE PRESIDENCY.

NES/GH/PY